

## **T-21-1 – “Louisiana Natural Heritage Program Workshop”**

*Abstract:* The Louisiana Natural Heritage Program (LNHP) maintains a comprehensive, computerized database on the occurrences of natural communities and rare plants and animal species. It is the only such database in the state. These data are collected by staff, university researchers, or gleaned from existing literature. The database is used by researchers, the generally public, private industry, and state, federal, and local governments in conservation and planning efforts. Internally, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) uses the database in reviewing proposed projects for the US Army Corps of Engineers, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, etc. The database has become a dependable source of occurrence information for natural communities and all rare plant and non-game animal species in the state. A review of files indicated that the database contains many old records that should be updated. Due to the importance of this database, and the need to update existing records and enter new occurrences, LNHP staff felt that other LDWF personnel could be an important source of information on occurrences and current status of natural communities and rare species, and that a series of LNHP workshops would be a good venue to advance this work.

Two workshops were conducted, the first on May 27, 2004 at the LDWF Headquarters in Baton Rouge, LA, and the second on April 28, 2005 at the LDWF Woodworth Outdoor Education Center in Woodworth, LA. LNHP and other LDWF staff gave presentations on the work and methodology of the Natural Heritage Program including information on Louisiana’s natural communities, rare plants, rare animals, reptiles and amphibians, the LNHP Biotics database system, the Natural Areas Registry Program and the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Safe Harbor Program. Guest speakers presented talks on Louisiana mussels, bats, and habitat conservation. LDWF wildlife biologists and foresters from seven district offices and WMA field offices were invited, and attendance included 49 personnel at the 2004 workshop and 28 at the 2005 workshop. An afternoon field trip was included in the 2005 workshop with visits to sites for the RCW, LA Pearlshell Mussel, Southern shield wood fern, and Western Upland Longleaf Pine and Forested Seep natural areas. District offices and Wildlife Management Area offices received field guide materials including:

- Reptiles and Amphibians of LA
- Florida Wetland Plants: An Identification Manual
- LNHP: Rare Plants, Natural Communities, and Rare Animal Lists
- Natural Communities and Rare Species Known to Occur on LA Wildlife Management Areas

Overall feedback on the workshops was positive. Most attendees felt that they received useful information that could be incorporated into their current job duties. Some felt that topics presented were too broad, and any future workshops should be focused on a regional level or to specific WMA’s.

The grant was closed on 30 June 2005.

**For more information** about State Wildlife Grant T-21, or to obtain copies of interim or final reports, please contact the State Wildlife Grant Coordinator, LDWF Fur & Refuge Division.